

Summary

Foreword

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Description of image: Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen

In uncertain times, people look to expert institutions like the ABS to provide reliable information to give them an understanding of what is happening to individuals, families, and businesses. Especially at times of rapid change, the expectation is that this information will be as close to 'real time' as possible, to enable communities and governments to respond quickly to minimise adverse impacts. As Australia recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ABS will continue to innovate to deliver high-quality, relevant, and trusted official statistics, data, and insights to inform Australia's important decisions.

The ABS has an ambitious work program for the next four years, which includes conducting the 18th Census of Population and Housing, along with major social surveys (such as the Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study); making greater use of existing administrative and 'big' data from both the public and private sectors; leading the Australian Public Service (APS) Data Profession to lift data capability across the APS; partnering with other APS agencies to produce better information for responding to natural disasters; and continuing to produce key Main Economic Indicators such as the National Accounts, Consumer Price Index, and Labour Force statistics.

For some time yet, we will be undertaking our work program in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, opportunities will arise as our environment continues to evolve. As a high performing organisation, to make the most of these opportunities we will need to make several shifts over coming years. We will improve how we manage our data, work collaboratively with our clients, and grow and develop our workforce. We'll also modernise our technology and continue to build our leadership capability.

Producing high-quality statistics is always our primary objective. How the ABS works will change over coming years, but our commitment to meeting Australia's information needs will remain steadfast.

Statement of Preparation

As the Accountable Authority of the ABS, I am pleased to present the ABS Corporate Plan which covers the period 2021–22 to 2024–25, in accordance with the requirements of section 35(1)(b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Dr David Gruen
Australian Statistician

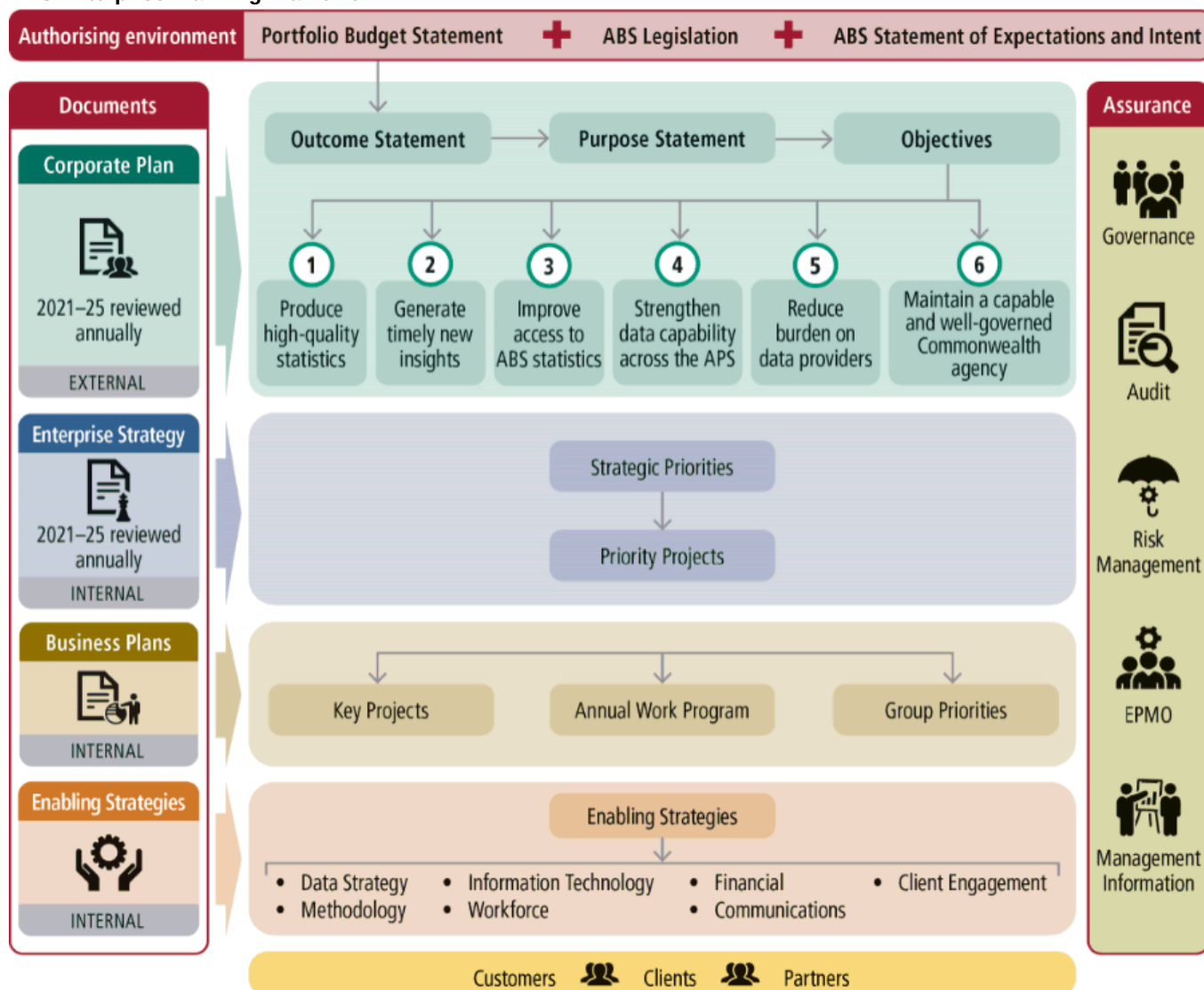
ABS Enterprise Planning Framework

ABS Enterprise Planning Framework

The ABS Enterprise Planning Framework ensures the objectives, strategies, and key activities over the four-year planning period support its obligations and meet the expectations of Government. The Framework also describes the enabling

functions to meet its obligations under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

ABS Enterprise Planning Framework



Description of image:

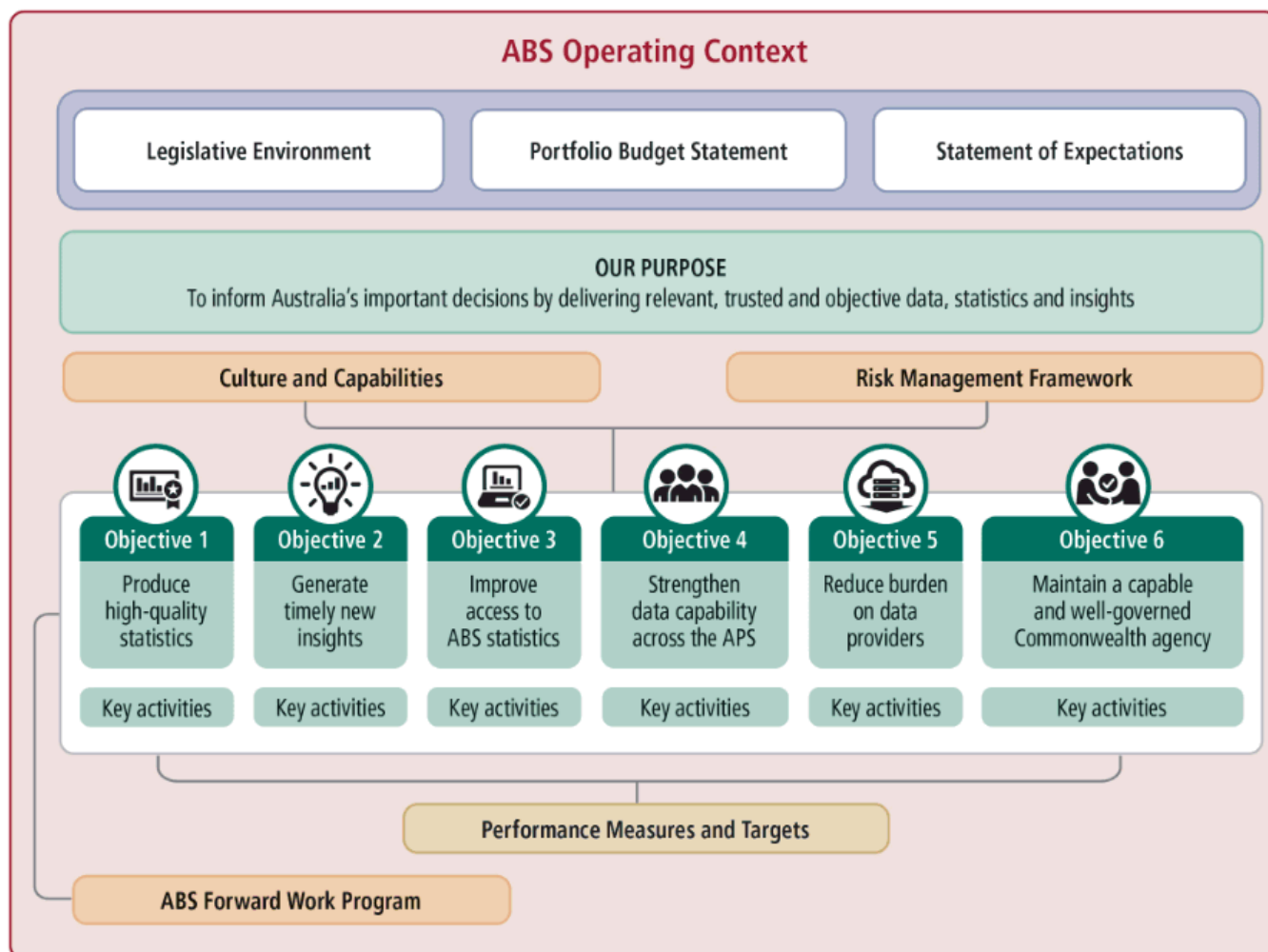
The flowchart presents the elements that make up the Enterprise Planning Framework. The **authorising environment** refers to the Portfolio Budget Statements, relevant ABS Legislation, and the Statement of Expectations and Intent. The ABS draws on these three elements for clarity as to the medium-term outcomes that must be achieved and our purpose as a Commonwealth entity. The **Corporate Plan** is the document that outlines the objectives and key activities required to deliver the outcome and purpose of the ABS. It also explains our operating context, and the performance information used to measure success. The **Enterprise Strategy** outlines ABS priorities, strategic directions and a number of major projects. **Business plans** are the more detailed planning documents used inside the ABS to describe the key initiatives, risks, projects, and annual work program for each Group and Division. The **Enabling Strategies** describe the approach the ABS will take to support key enabling functions such as: data integration, statistical methodology, information technology, workforce, finance, communications, and client engagement. **Assurance** mechanisms are used to continuously review and assess the robustness of our controls environment, our compliance with legislative and policy obligations, the efficiency and sustainability of our operations, the appropriateness of our governance arrangements, the economy of our processes and practices, and the effectiveness of our planning and management in achieving the outcomes we seek.

Elements of the Corporate Plan

Elements of the Corporate Plan

The ABS Corporate Plan articulates the purpose, operating environment, approach to key aspects of work, high-level objectives and activities, and the targets against which performance can be assessed. The ABS Corporate Plan meets the requirements of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

ABS Corporate Plan elements



Description of image: This image outlines the relationship between the elements of the ABS Corporate Plan. At the top of the image it highlights the legislative environment, Portfolio Budget Statements, and the Statement of Expectations which provide an overarching set of source documents that shape what the ABS will do. The full text of the ABS Purpose statement is shown underneath this. Next, it points to the capabilities, culture, and risk management practices that support the achievement of 6 corporate objectives and the statistical products delivered within the Forward Work Program. Lastly, it highlights the part of the Corporate Plan that explains the performance targets and measures used to determine whether the ABS has been successful throughout the period of the Plan.

About the ABS

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Purpose

To inform Australia's important decisions by delivering relevant, trusted, and objective data, statistics, and insights.

Role

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency. It provides trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population, and environmental matters of importance to Australia.

The ABS has leadership roles in maximising the use of public data for statistical purposes and improving the Australian Government's statistical capability. The ABS advises official bodies on producing and using data and statistics, formulates standards, works with states and territories, and liaises internationally.

Legislation

The primary functions, duties, and powers of the ABS are set out in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 and the Census and Statistics Act 1905.

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 establishes the ABS as an independent statutory authority and legislates its main function as the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and provider of services for state and territory governments.
- The Census and Statistics Act 1905 empowers the Australian Statistician to collect statistical information on a broad range of demographic, economic, environmental, and social topics and contains strong provisions to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act.
- The Census and Statistics (Information Release and Access) Determination 2018 enables the Statistician to release information collected under the Census and Statistics Act 1905 when specific conditions are met.

The ABS must comply with the governance and accountability system defined by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. The ABS must also comply with a range of legislation including the Public Service Act 1999, the Freedom of Information Act 1982, the Privacy Act 1988, and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013.

Values

The ABS seeks to uphold the APS Values:

- **Impartial**—apolitical and provides the Australian Government with frank and timely advice based on the best available evidence.
- **Committed to service**—professional, objective, innovative, and efficient. The ABS works collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and Government.
- **Accountable**—accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of ministerial responsibility.
- **Respectful**—respect all people, including their rights and heritage.
- **Ethical**—honest and trustworthy, and acts with integrity in all it does.

Operating context

Operating context

Environment

The ABS works within a complex and dynamic environment. Within this environment, the ABS is responding to several factors including:

- continuing adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including operational implications for the ABS and its staff
- government responses to a changing climate and natural hazards
- new technologies to improve the data system efficiency across the APS
- flexible work practices to increase access to labour markets, reduce property expenses, and retain staff
- increased collaboration within and across governments
- changing expectations of clients, including the need for more timely statistics, reduced provider burden, and access to microdata for research and policy development
- availability of alternative data sources, including large private sector datasets
- growing need for data skills and expertise across the Australian Government, in a competitive labour market
- community concern about data privacy
- increasing cyber-security threats.

In 2021–22, the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to have a profound impact on Australia's economy and society. The ABS continues to play a pivotal role in measuring the impacts of the pandemic on society and the economy with a range of more-timely statistical products to inform the Government's response.

The ABS has a continuing obligation to deliver core statistical products that are critical to government, business, and the Australian community. The ABS looks for ways to reduce the burden placed on providers by only collecting data directly from households and business where this data is not available through other means. The ABS has used non-survey¹ datasets to meet some of the increased demand for more detailed and timely statistics, and to deliver more detailed statistics more frequently.

Collecting data from households is becoming more difficult and expensive as the attitudes and lifestyle habits of individuals and families change over time. People are more mobile, and their contact details change more frequently. The ABS is making better use of technology to contact, identify, and engage survey participants remotely to respond to these changes.

The ABS continues to invest in international best-practice methods for the secure storage, processing, and dissemination of statistics.

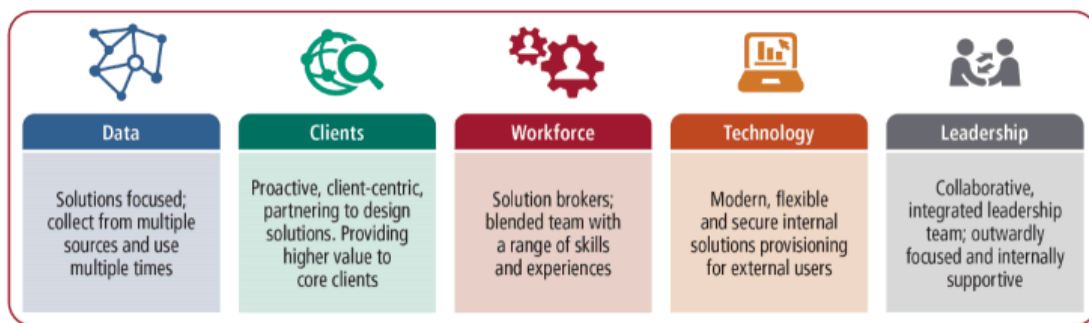
The ABS is a leader in Australia's data environment, with the Australian Statistician as the Head of the Data Profession for the APS. In leading the APS Data Profession, the ABS is working to lift the capability of the APS workforce to generate deeper insights to inform decision-making in policy development, management, and service delivery.

Capability

The ABS has a capable, resilient, agile, and engaged workforce. The ABS of the future requires experienced leadership, a diverse workforce with deep expertise in key areas, and an inclusive workplace culture.

The ABS has identified a series of shifts to respond to the opportunities and demands of its environment. These shifts will be most noticeable in how the ABS: sources and protects data; engages with its clients; shapes its workforce; modernises its technologies; and strengthens its leadership.

Identified 'shifts' in key areas of data, clients, workforce, technology and leadership



Description of image: This image identifies the 5 priority capabilities where the ABS intends to make important changes (or shifts) to respond to the opportunities and demands of its environment. These capabilities are 1. data, 2. clients, 3. workforce, 4. technology, and 5. leadership.

In 2021–22 and beyond, the ABS will build capability by:

- recruiting to address critical and in-demand skillsets including data scientists, data analysts, methodology specialists, cyber-security, and artificial intelligence
- leveraging the APS-wide Data Profession
- improving engagement with government, providers of big data², and other key partners
- further embedding high performance behaviours in ABS leaders
- investing in support for managers in increasingly flexible working environments
- further embedding a safety culture and practices that underpin physical and mental wellbeing
- redeploying skilled staff to high priority areas, including the 2021 Census, through operational workforce planning and internal mobility programs.

The ABS is enhancing its capabilities to leverage big data sources. The ABS will expand its already world-class methods to store, manipulate, integrate, and analyse large datasets. The ABS continues to collaborate with international statistical organisations to ensure its methods for producing high-quality statistics are world best-practice.

The ABS will continue to invest in data science capabilities to underpin its leadership in data integration, analysis, and handling within the APS. It will increase the use of big and administrative³ data to reduce the need for surveys, and work with third parties to directly source data, in its ongoing attempts to reduce provider burden.

Through its Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategy, the ABS is modernising its ICT to support the production of high-quality statistics, provide a platform for innovation, and deliver future-focused technical capabilities. The ABS is incrementally improving its systems to maximise value and reduce the time to deliver new data solutions and services.

Risk oversight and management

The ABS approach to risk management emphasises ownership of risk by individual business units and risk management action proportionate to each unit's risk profile.

Existing governance arrangements support good communication of risks among business units and enable collective responses to common and critical risks. These arrangements also support the effective escalation of higher-level risks while empowering line managers to deal with lower-level risks.

The ABS enterprise risk management framework continues to evolve to better capture risk and improve awareness about individual responsibility for risk management. Enterprise risk stewards operate in support of Deputy-level risk owners by scanning the risk environment, collaborating with senior managers across the organisation, and informing risk assessments with accurate and timely business intelligence.

The ABS is committed to producing and publishing timely insights as well as high-quality statistical information and will seek to limit risks to core statistical releases and services. The ABS does not accept risk to its people and will make every effort to comply with its legislative and legal obligations.

The ABS embraces risk to innovate to deliver relevant and timely statistics. Where strategies and objectives result in higher risk, the ABS relies on effective internal management and regular engagement with clients to ensure there is appropriate awareness and understanding of the risk.

The ABS cannot, and should not, seek to eliminate all risk as it delivers its purpose. Change involves risk, and the ABS is continually adapting to deliver relevant information to support important decisions.

Strategic uncertainties

A number of strategic uncertainties may affect the ability of the ABS to achieve its objectives, including:

- increasing difficulty contacting people to collect data
- rapidly increasing demand from clients for data services
- increasing competition for skilled statisticians and data scientists as public and private sectors develop their capability and demand for these skills
- changing public expectations for privacy, and its impacts on trust in government institutions

- increasing threat of cyber-security attack
- increasing numbers of providers of data and data capability.

Cooperation

The ABS cooperates with a wide range of Australian, state, and territory government agencies and businesses to provide statistical services and to gain access to critical non-survey datasets. By accessing these datasets, the ABS can reduce the survey burden on households and businesses, improve statistical quality, and generate new statistics and products more rapidly.

The ABS engages with partners to co-design surveys and develop the best products for their purposes – with minimum redundant effort. This results in better outcomes for both the ABS and its partners.

The ABS also receives funding from other government agencies to undertake surveys and integrate and disseminate data on their behalf. The ABS is currently working in partnership with state, territory, and other Australian government agencies in areas such as health, climate, the economy, and education. In partnering with other agencies, the ABS aims to:

- securely deliver more appropriate, useful, and timely data and statistical insights
- build capability – in both people and systems – with a whole-of-APS perspective
- provide better services, including access to critical data, by engaging with users
- lead advancements in the broader data system
- reduce the burden on data providers by making better use of existing data assets.

The ABS actively partners with a broad range of Australian Government entities, including (but not limited to):

- Central agencies: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Department of the Treasury
- Australian government departments: Home Affairs; Health; Agriculture, Water and Environment; Defence; Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Education, Skills and Employment; Social Services
- Portfolio agencies and Commonwealth companies: National Skills Commission; Services Australia; Australian Electoral Commission; Australia Post; Bureau of Meteorology; Geoscience Australia; CSIRO; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; Public Sector Mapping Authority; Australian Prudential Regulation Authority.

The ABS partners with state and territory government entities to deliver regional insights on jurisdictional priorities. Data provided by state and territory registries of Births, Deaths, and Marriages is critical to the production of population estimates.

The ABS also relies on Indigenous organisations; community groups; private sector organisations; industry groups; and commercial organisations including supermarkets and banks to build community support and access data. The ABS engages with academia and other national statistical organisations abroad.

The ABS manages and oversees these collaborations through memoranda of understanding, deeds of agreement, statements of intent, and commercial contracts.

1 Non-survey datasets are comprised of data that is sourced from methods other than a survey or census, such as big data or administrative data.

2 Big data refers to 'data that contains greater variety, arriving in increasing volumes and with more velocity. This is also known as the three Vs.' <https://www.oracle.com/au/big-data/what-is-big-data/>

3 Administrative data is information collected by government agencies, businesses, or organisations for various purposes, including registrations, transactions, and record keeping, usually during the delivery of a service.

Objectives

Objectives

The objectives of the ABS correspond to the Government's Statement of Expectations for the ABS, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975, and the Census and Statistics Act 1905. The Government's Statement of Expectations requires the ABS to operate independently and objectively and in a way that maintains its reputation as a world-class statistical agency. This Statement also requires the ABS to appropriately align its work with key government policy objectives, be accountable and efficient, engage with stakeholders, and collaborate with other government entities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 and the Census and Statistics Act 1905 set out the primary functions, duties, and powers of the ABS.

The detailed ABS statistical work program is provided in Part 2—ABS Forward Work Program. The Forward Work Program provides insight into the delivery of outputs from ongoing statistical collections over the life of this Plan, with an indication of how the ABS has prioritised these products.

Objective 1—Produce high-quality statistics

Objective 2—Generate timely new insights

Objective 3—Improve access to ABS statistics
Objective 4—Strengthen data capability across the APS
Objective 5—Reduce burden on data providers
Objective 6—Maintain a capable and well-governed Commonwealth agency

Objective 1—Produce high-quality statistics

ABS data and statistics inform important decisions made by governments, business, and the wider community. They underpin sound fiscal and monetary policies and inform the delivery of programs and services vital to the health and wellbeing of Australians. The ABS produces statistics to inform monitoring and decision-making for numerous aspects of the Australian economy and society.

ABS data and statistics also support a strong well-functioning democracy. ABS data contributes to fair electoral boundaries by accurately showing the relative population growth of communities in different locations and changing population densities. Just as importantly, ABS statistics provide accurate information on a range of matters critical to public debate.

Key activities

Economic, Industry, and Environmental Statistics

The ABS is partnering with the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, and Geoscience Australia to deliver the Australian Climate Service (ACS). The ACS will create new knowledge to support Australia's response to natural disasters, enabling the ABS to combine its data with weather, climate, and hazard information in new ways. The ABS will improve its ability to geo-spatially present socio-economic data, improve its business location dataset, and augment integrated datasets.

Labour, Population and Social Statistics

The ABS population and social statistics program produces information about Australia's population, including size and composition, and measures of social and economic wellbeing. The ABS will continue to deliver these statistics, particularly its quarterly population estimates—which are required by legislation.

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to end violence against women and children, the ABS is funded, over four years, by the Department of Social Services to continue the Personal Safety Survey (PSS). The ABS will also work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop measures of family domestic and sexual violence through an Indigenous PSS.

In 2020, the ABS produced a Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages series to provide more timely and frequent information about the labour market during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ABS is committed to refining the quality and outputs of this series to meet user demand. In 2021–22, the ABS will collect detailed information from employers on the number of hours worked by employees and their earnings, in the two-yearly Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours.

Over the next two years, the ABS will update the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) and produce experimental data to reflect the occupations, and associated skill levels, of the following sectors: agriculture, forestry and fisheries; naval shipbuilding; and ICT (focussing on cyber-security). This work will incorporate the 25 emerging occupations published by the National Skills Commission. Work to implement the updated ANZSCO, in official quarterly labour force statistics, will commence in 2022.

The ABS will produce experimental agricultural labour force data by recoding 2021 Census data to support the Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment's agricultural workforce strategy (scheduled for release in late 2022).

The ABS will update its Estimated Resident Population series to reflect a new base population provided by the 2021 Census. The Post Census Review, a large household survey, will check the coverage and accuracy of the Census population count.

2021 Census of Population and Housing

Every five years, the ABS conducts the Census of Population and Housing. Census night in 2021 is Tuesday 10 August. The Census is a legislated obligation under the Census and Statistics Act 1905.

The Census asks questions of all people in Australia on Census night on a range of topics such as age, country of birth, religion (optional), ancestry, language used at home, work, and education.

Census data is unique in its provision of detail for micro-geographies and small communities. It is used to inform important decisions about transport, schools, health care, infrastructure, and business. It also helps plan local services for individuals, families, and communities.

Running the Census is a large and complex exercise and involves the ABS working closely with key stakeholders to ensure everyone can participate. For the 2021 Census the ABS has established strong partnerships with the following entities:

- Australian Cyber Security Centre and Digital Transformation Agency: supporting the delivery of the Census Digital Service and ensuring the security of Census data.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia and Amazon Web Services Australia: delivering the Census Digital Service, including the online form and Census website.
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia: ensuring community groups representing people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are well prepared to participate in the Census.
- Woolworths: supporting the Census through the facilitation of pop-up hubs to promote the Census and directly assist citizens to participate.

- Northern Territory Government: through the formation of the NT Census Steering Committee and Working Group. This partnership facilitates sharing information and networks to achieve shared objectives.
- Queensland Government: through a range of areas of assistance, notably in a partner communications campaign.
- Adecco Australia: assisting with the recruitment of the 2021 Census temporary workforce.

The first results from the 2021 Census will be available in June 2022.

Agricultural Census

The five-yearly Agricultural Census will be undertaken during the 2021–22 financial year. It will provide benchmark national, state, and regional data on the 2020–21 financial year to support research and decision-making by governments and businesses. The Agricultural Census reaches around 100,000 agricultural businesses and provides output at a more granular level than is available from the much smaller annual agriculture survey.

Objective 2—Generate timely new insights

The ABS engages with key clients and users of its data to meet their needs.

The ABS will continue to release statistical products to meet the critical demands of government and business for health, employment, consumer spending, and other relevant information to aid the COVID-19 pandemic recovery. The ABS is also enhancing its data integration assets and infrastructure. The ABS is using new data sources to address emerging information needs, augment existing products, and validate existing methodologies. This will continue ABS efforts to inform important social, environmental, economic, health, and other policy issues.

Key activities

Data integration projects

The ABS is an Accredited Integrating Authority with responsibility for linking relevant data from a range of sources; providing access to authorised users via highly secure ABS systems; and safeguarding privacy—applying many layers of protection to ensure that information that could identify individuals is not disclosed.

In partnership with other agencies, the ABS supports the analysis of integrated data including through two key integrated longitudinal data assets:

- Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) combines tax, trade, and intellectual property data with information from ABS surveys to provide a better understanding of Australian businesses and the economy.
- The Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) combines data from a range of sources on health, education, government payments, income, taxation, and population demographics (including the Census) to create a comprehensive picture of Australia.

For 2021–22, approved ABS and collaborative projects supported through BLADE and MADIP include:

- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccine rollout by linking Australian Immunisation Register data with MADIP. This includes acquiring and linking other strategically important datasets to enable cross-agency, near real-time analysis of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout to inform the implementation strategy and targeted policy interventions.
- Enabling near real-time analysis on the economy and labour market to support Commonwealth and jurisdictional COVID-19 response and recovery. This includes understanding the impacts on employment and unemployment, targeting of employment and training programs, and analysing labour market transitions.
- Monitoring and modelling of the changing need for mental health and suicide prevention supports during COVID-19 through the Mental Health Pandemic Response Plan.
- Contributing to an evidence base to support cross-agency analysis of vulnerability and resilience of people and businesses in natural disasters, supporting the National Recovery and Resilience Agency.
- Enhancing the understanding of employment and social outcomes of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students in Australia to support the National Skills Commissioner inform policy for more targeted, outcomes-based investment in the VET system.
- Providing direct measures of a school community's capacity to contribute to underpin the national non-government school funding model.
- Integrating New South Wales and MADIP data to create an evidence-base to inform new policies and interventions to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in NSW, and support the evaluation of policies and interventions to improve long-term outcomes for these children or young people and their families.
- Integrating government business program data and BLADE to inform program evaluation, and future policy and programs designed to assist Australian businesses.
- Creating an official ABS statistical product - the 2017–18 Personal Income of Migrants Integrated Dataset – to provide insights on migrant incomes for policy makers and researchers.
- Assessing the feasibility of creating simulated MADIP and BLADE microdata that preserves relationships between key variables and maintains confidentiality.

Over four years, commencing in 2021–22, the Department of Social Services will fund the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in collaboration with the ABS, to undertake a pilot to assess the feasibility of linking crime and justice data with

other social datasets. This project aims to develop a comprehensive data and reporting system on family, domestic, and sexual violence that provides a more complete picture and greater insights into the life outcomes of people experiencing family and domestic violence, including victim-survivors and perpetrators.

New statistics

The ABS will use big data to deliver more timely economic indicators of the Australian economy. This project will deliver:

- a set of monthly economic indicators comprising: business turnover (using monthly Business Activity Statement data); household spending (using bank transaction data and supermarket scanner data); and earnings of employees (using Single Touch Payroll data).
- more frequent and more geographically detailed information, such as business turnover at the regional level and earnings by workforce characteristics.

During 2021–22, the ABS will continue a series of research projects to provide greater insights into productivity in the non-market sector. This will include developing experimental estimates of productivity for schools, universities, and hospitals (including market and non-market components).

Objective 3—Improve access to ABS statistics

ABS data and statistics are valuable national assets. There are many users of ABS data and statistics including government entities, local councils, public and not-for-profit organisations, academics, researchers, students, businesses, public policy institutes, local community groups, and other private sector agencies. The ABS is committed to improving access, while ensuring privacy and confidentiality is maintained.

Key activities

The ABS will continue to provide access to statistics through a range of avenues, including the ABS website, the DataLab, TableBuilder, and customised data requests.

Users of ABS statistics can access them freely on the ABS website or by configuring their systems to an application programming interface (API). Machine-to-machine access provides a fast avenue for regular users to import data into their systems.

More microdata, available at a cost, will also be released to the virtual DataLab which supports researchers to undertake complex research work more efficiently.

The ABS is committed to the return of information to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, delivering data in formats that are both useful and culturally appropriate.

To increase awareness of ABS statistics, the ABS will continue to use social media platforms to engage with the Australian public, and proactively engage media and industry. The ABS will release a range of snapshots and infographics on its social media platforms which provide notice of key upcoming releases and highlight topical statistics.

Objective 4—Strengthen data capability across the APS

The Australian Government recognises the importance of using data to better understand and respond to the needs of Australians. It has committed to ensuring the APS has the right capability, tools, and processes to securely use, share, and understand data for better policy advice, regulation, and services. Following the appointment of the Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen, as Head of the Data Profession, the ABS has partnered with the Australian Public Service Commission to establish the APS Data Profession. The ABS has welcomed the opportunity to drive collaboration, strengthen data capability, and build a more sophisticated expertise for data professionals. The ABS is working with 25 agencies to progress the initial two-year work program for the Data Profession.

The ABS has developed a Data Strategy that will help the ABS make decisions about funding and priorities, and develop the required culture, tools, knowledge, systems, and processes. The Data Strategy will better position the ABS to explore opportunities and meet the challenges of the coming years by enhancing its security settings, and maximising the value of the data it holds, while continuing to keep data safe. The Chief Data Officer will oversee the delivery of the Data Strategy, improve data governance, and lead the ABS' data culture.

Key activities

The ABS will play a leadership role in building data capability across the APS by driving a range of practical initiatives being developed under the Data Profession, including: establishing an APS Data Capability Framework and embedding its use across agencies to ensure a common language and understanding of the data capabilities required by APS employees; building development-focused opportunities for people in data roles, including increasing mobility and knowledge sharing across the service; and creating development pathways to build skills for all APS staff, as well as the specialist and more advanced skills required by data professionals.

The ABS is leading the recruitment of data graduates for placements across the APS to help attract, recruit, and retain the next generation of data professionals. This work will support a service-wide approach to continually lifting the capability of the APS to maximise the value of data in delivering better outcomes for Australians.

Objective 5—Reduce burden on data providers

The Government's deregulation agenda aims to design and implement regulation in the most efficient and timely way, with the smallest cost to businesses. The ABS has been managing the burden on data providers over the past decade and is committed to reducing this burden further.

The ABS collaborates with clients and providers with the aim of increasing their understanding of the value of their data, and minimising the burden placed on them. Where collecting data is needed, the ABS uses statistical techniques to ensure the load is shared as evenly as possible. In addition, the ABS aims to provide contemporary, tailored, and intuitive services to assist providers to meet their obligations.

The ABS continues to increase the use of non-survey data, including data collected by governments and the private sector, to reduce the need to conduct surveys, and to get the balance right between burden and delivering public value. The ABS is committed to improving engagement with data providers, reducing the time required to complete surveys, and reducing the number of surveys businesses and households need to complete each year.

The ABS is constantly reviewing data collection methods to reduce the effort required by businesses and individuals providing data and enable them to respond more quickly to data requests.

Key activities

In 2021—22, the ABS will continue a series of trials to investigate options for reducing regulatory burden. These trials will investigate options for:

- streamlining and automating data submission processes for large businesses
- enabling small and medium businesses to report data using existing mechanisms such as business accounting software
- reducing the reporting burden on businesses by enabling other Commonwealth entities to use confidentialised data already provided by businesses to the ABS.

Objective 6—Maintain a capable and well-governed Commonwealth agency

The ABS strives to be an effective, efficient, and flexible agency that cooperates across Government. The ABS maintains clear internal policies for effective and accountable decision-making to align its work and purpose.

The ABS is committed to continual improvement of management and governance practices, to assure Australians it works with integrity and accountability. The ABS will also focus on supporting its staff to deliver to a high standard against emerging priorities and business as usual functions in a connected and collaborative way.

The ABS relies on internal and external audit, as well as other independent performance and compliance reviews, to provide the assurance that operations are efficient, effective, lawful, consistent with legislative and policy obligations, and aligned to the expectations of government.

The ABS is committed to creating a collaborative, accountable, agile, innovative, and customer-focused agency. The ABS has developed enabling strategies to strengthen its capabilities, which cover its workforce, finance, data, customer experience, and information and communications technology.

The ABS assesses its performance against this objective through a number of measures reported to internal governance fora. The ABS does not publish performance measures against this objective, although aspects of performance are available in the ABS Annual Report.

Key activities

The ABS will enhance its Enterprise Portfolio Management Office (EPMO) to build capability and project governance practices. The EPMO will also support business planning and guide effective investment decisions.

The ABS will adopt cloud-based capabilities to blend big data with survey data. The new cloud-based capabilities, along with reengineering of some surveys, will enable a more resilient processing environment.

The ABS will continue to operate responsibly by reporting accurately on its financial position and performance. The ABS will also maintain appropriate systems of risk oversight and management, internal controls, and assurance (including an internal audit program).

Performance information

Performance information

Objective 1: Produce high-quality statistics

1.1 Trust in ABS statistics—level of trust in the ABS and its statistics

Method	Targets	Years measured
Community Trust in ABS Statistics Survey (CTASS)	At least 85% level of trust in ABS and ABS statistics	2024-25

Number of statistics released free of significant errors¹

100% of statistics are released free of significant errors

2021–22 to 2024–25

1.2 International compliance—ABS statistics meet standards for National and International Accounts, Labour Force, Unemployment, Consumer Price Index, and Estimates of Resident Population

Method	Target	Years measured
Compliance with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) ²	IMF assess ABS to be 100% compliant with SDDS for in-scope collections	2021–22 to 2024–25

1.3 Conduct the Census³—implementation of the Census to deliver trusted data

Method	Targets	Years measured
Response rate to the 2021 Census	95% response rate	2021–22
Independent survey of user sentiment toward the 2021 Census	80% of the community support the Census	2021–22
Validation of the quality of 2021 Census data by the Independent Assurance Panel	2021 Census data is of a comparable quality to previous Censuses	2021–22
Release of the first statistics from the 2021 Census within 12 months of Census night	First release of Census data occurs before 10 August 2022	2022–23
Complete public consultation on 2026 Census topics	Publish 2026 Census Topic Directions	2023–24
Finalise 2026 Census topics	Regulations are updated to define Census topics	2024–25

Objective 2: Generate timely new insights

2.1 Stakeholder needs are met—new statistics or insights are used to inform priority policy or decisions

Method	Case studies	Year measured ⁴
Case studies showing how new statistics or insights are used by clients	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Use of Single Touch Payroll data from the Australian Taxation Office to create new insights to inform and evaluate government policy e.g. Treasury real-time labour market tracker, Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages, business turnover indicator.Insights into the employment outcomes of women in STEM: longitudinal analysis using MADIP.	2021–22

Objective 3: Improve access to ABS statistics

3.1 Access to ABS data and statistics—access to data products and services

Method	Targets ⁵	Years measured
Composite index of channel access:	102	2021–22
• Calls to API service	106 ⁶	2022–23
• Number of DataLab sessions	108	2023–24
• Invoices for customised data services	111	2024–25
• Count of ABS website sessions		
• Registered users of TableBuilder		

Objective 4: Strengthen data capability across the APS

4.1 Senior Executive Service (SES) data capability—completion of data leadership training

Method	Targets	Years measured
Number of APS SES officers who complete data leadership training	Two pilot courses are delivered with a total of 40 attendees	2021–22
	Four courses are delivered with a total of 80 attendees	2022–23 to 2024–25

Objective 5: Reduce burden on data providers

5.1 Burden on survey respondents—time taken to complete business surveys

Method	Targets ⁷	Years measured
Total time taken for survey respondents to complete business surveys	0 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2021–22
	6.5 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2022–23
	13 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2023–24
	20 percentage point decrease on benchmark	2024–25

5.2 Efficiency of statistical operations—improve efficiency with which data is collected

Method	Case studies	Year measured ⁸
Case studies showing efficiencies made in collecting data for statistical purposes	1. Reducing the size of the Agricultural Census form to reduce burden on providers. 2. Use of the Big Data, Timely Insights initiative to replace the Monthly Retail Survey.	2021–22

1 An error is significant if it could mislead a user as to the value of a statistical indicator of national or state importance.

2 <https://dsbb.imf.org/sdds>

3 Each Census is implemented over a five-year period and as such, targets for this measure change each year to reflect the major phases of Census. Targets relevant to the years covered by this Plan are included here.

4 Case study topics listed for this measure are reported against for only the first year covered by this Plan i.e. 2021–22. Each year, new case studies are selected for reporting against this measure.

5 Based on a benchmark value in 2020–21 of 100.

6 The significant increase over 2021–22 reflects the likelihood of high levels of interest in 2021 Census releases.

7 Based on a benchmark value of 338,964 hours from 2020–21.

8 Case study topics listed for this measure are reported against for only the first year covered by this Plan i.e. 2021–22. Each year, new case studies are selected for reporting against this measure.

Forward Work Program

This document was added or updated on 20/09/2021.

ABS Forward Work Program

The Forward Work Program (FWP) provides the schedule of statistical releases over the next four years. This program does not include experimental estimates and research papers. In addition to the official releases listed in this program, the ABS generates a significant number of customised data products to meet the needs of specific clients.

This program was developed through extensive consultation with government, key stakeholders including users of statistics, other government entities and a range of non-government organisations such as community groups and industry bodies.

The ABS reviews and makes changes to the FWP to ensure it continues to appropriately measure the Australian economy, environment, and society. Program changes announced in April 2021 have been reflected.

The statistical work program is classified into three tiers to assist with prioritising resources. This tiering was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Tier 1	Statistics that are the foundation work of a national statistical organisation.
Tier 2	Important areas of statistics where there is a significant government outlay or where there is a significant public policy interest.
Tier 3	Other important statistical work that is currently undertaken to meet identified user requirements.

Year of Release						
Release	Tier	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Release Frequency
Labour Market						
Average Weekly Earnings	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Six-monthly
Barriers and Incentives to Labour	T2	✓		✓		Two-yearly
Force Participation						

Characteristics of Employment	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Employee Earnings	T1		✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Employment and Earnings, Public Sector	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Industrial Disputes	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Job Vacancies Survey	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Jobs in Australia	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Labour Account	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Labour Force Survey	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Participation, Job Search and Mobility	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Retirement and Retirement Intentions	T2	✓		✓		Two-yearly
Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours	T1	✓		✓		Two-yearly
Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia (COVID-19) ¹	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia (COVID-19) - interim ²	T2	✓				Monthly
Work Related Injuries	T2		✓			Four-yearly
Economic Accounts						
Australian National Accounts: Finance and Wealth	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Balance of Payments and International Investment Position	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Government Finance Statistics	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Economic Indicators						
Australian Industry	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Assets and Liabilities of Australian Securitiser	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Building Activity and Engineering Construction	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Building Approvals	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Business Characteristics	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Business Turnover	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
International Trade in Goods and Services	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Lending Indicators	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Managed Funds	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Mineral and Petroleum Exploration	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Quarterly Business Indicators	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Research and Development Expenditure	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Retail Trade Survey	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Price Indicators						
Consumer Price Index	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
International Trade Price Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Producer Price Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Residential Property Price Indexes	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Selected Living Cost Indexes	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Wage Price Index	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Demographic						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Life Expectancy	T2			✓		Five-yearly
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Estimates and Projections	T2			✓		Five-yearly
Births and Deaths	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Causes of Death	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Household and Family Projections	T1			✓		Five-yearly
Life Expectancy	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Marriages and Divorces	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Overseas Arrivals and Departures	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Population Projections	T2			✓		Five-yearly
Quarterly Estimated Resident Population by State, including Net Overseas Migration	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly ³
Regional Population Statistics	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Australian Historical Population Statistics	T3			✓		Five-yearly

Australian National Accounts

Australian System of National Accounts	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Industry Multi-Factor Productivity Estimates	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Input Output Tables	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Modellers' Database	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
State Accounts	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Supply Use Tables	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly

Environmental and Sectorial

Agricultural Census	T2	✓				Five-yearly
Agriculture Commodities and Production	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Energy Use and Electricity Generation	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Environmental Indicators	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Tourism Satellite Account	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Water and Energy Accounts	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Water Supply and Sewage	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly

Social Statistics

Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset	T3			✓		Five-yearly
Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey	T2			✓		Three-yearly
Crime: prisoners, criminal courts, crime victimisation, recorded crime	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Cultural Attendance and Participation Survey	T3	✓				Four-yearly
Gender Indicators	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
General Social Survey ⁴	T3		✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Household Expenditure Survey	T1	✓				Six-yearly
Household Impacts of COVID-19 ⁵	T1	✓				Monthly
Household Spending	T1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monthly
Income of Migrants	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study	T3					Irregular
- National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing		✓	✓	✓		
- Health Survey			✓			
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey				✓		
- National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey - for the general population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples					✓	
- National Health Measures Survey - for the general population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples					✓	
National Health Survey	T2	✓			✓	Three-yearly
Patient Experience Survey	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Personal Income in Australia	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Personal Safety Survey	T3	✓				Four-yearly
Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey	T3		✓			Irregular
Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers	T2		✓			Three-yearly
Survey of Education and Work	T2	✓	✓	✓	✓	Yearly
Survey of Income and Housing ⁶	T1	✓	✓	✓		Two-yearly
Survey of Qualifications and Work	T3		✓			Four-yearly
Time Use Survey ⁷	T1		✓		✓	Two-yearly
Work Related Training and Adult Learning Survey	T2				✓	Four-yearly

Census

Population and Housing	T1	✓				Five-yearly
Post Census Review ⁸	T1	✓				Five-yearly

Other

Australian Statistician's Analytical Series	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
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Data by Region	T3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Six-monthly
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1 Commencing in September 2021, the main Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages (COVID-19) release frequency was revised from fortnightly to monthly. A monthly frequency allows for richer content and better alignment with other relevant releases.

2 An interim release between monthly Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages (COVID-19) releases was introduced in September 2021 to provide additional state and territory labour market insights through late 2021. As the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic changes, the ABS will review this frequency to ensure the release best meets information needs.

3 Re-based every five years following the Census of Population and Housing.

4 Fieldwork will be paused in 2021-22 to undertake a review of collection requirements.

5 Final release July 2021.

6 An extra cycle of the Survey of Income and Housing will be run in 2021–22, with results to be published in 2022–23, to help measure the impact of COVID-19 on Australian households.

7 Previously an annual collection, the Time Use Survey is released on a two-yearly basis for the life of this Plan (2021-22 to 2024-25). The ongoing frequency of this collection is currently under review.

8 The Post Census Review was previously known as the Post Enumeration Survey.

About this Release

The ABS Corporate Plan outlines the role of the ABS as a national statistical agency and the future directions of the organisation.

A downloadable PDF of the current Plan can be located on the Government's Transparency Portal.

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